

Message Text

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12

ACTION EB-11

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FM AMEMBASSY KABUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8021

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

UNCLAS KABUL 3170

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EIND, UK, AF

SUBJECT: AFGHAN KARAKUL SALES IN LONDON

1. AFGHANISTAN HELD ITS FIRST AUCTION OF THE AFGHAN YEAR IN KARAKUL IN LONDON EARLY IN MAY. IT HAD EARLIER BEEN SUGGESTED THAT THIS AUCTION WOULD NOT BE HELD BECAUSE OF POOR TRADE CONDITIONS BUT THEY WENT AHEAD. ONLY ABOUT 51 PER CENT OF THE SKINS PUT ON AUCTION WERE SOLD, APPROXIMATELY 100,000 SKINS. DESPITE PREVIOUS PREDICTIONS, PRICES HELD FAIRLY STEADY WITH FOUR SPECIALTY CLASSES INCREASING IN PRICE AND ONLY THE LARGEST CATEGORY OF GRAY SKINS AND BLACK BROADTAIL DECREASING IN PRICE. ACCORDING TO "THE KABUL TIMES" MORE THAN ONE MILLION DOLLARS WERE OBTAINED FROM THE SALES, WHICH PUTS THE AVERAGE PRICE SOMEWHERE NEAR TEN DOLLARS PER SKIN. THE MAIN BUYERS WERE LISTED AS THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY AND ITALY.

2. DESPITE THE FAIRLY GOOD PRICES, THIS AUCTION MUST BE A DISAPPOINTMENT TO AFGHANISTAN SINCE SUCH A LOW PERCENTAGE OF SKINS OFFERED WERE SOLD. THIS AUCTION, HOWEVER, IS TRADITIONALLY THE POOREST OF THE FOUR OR FIVE HELD ANNUALLY SINCE IT CONSISTS MOSTLY OF SKINS LEFT OVER FROM PREVIOUS AUCTIONS. EMBOFF HAS SPOKEN TO TWO KARAKUL MERCHANTS WHO STATE THAT THEIR PLANS NOW ARE TO CONTINUE AT ABOUT THE SAME LEVEL OF PRODUCTION AS LAST YEAR DESPITE PREVIOUS THOUGHTS OF CUTTING DOWN OR GETTING OUT OF THE BUSINESS.
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